

Dated October 17, 2002

MEMORANDUM

FROM: Marianne Lamont Horinko /s/
Assistant Administrator

TO: RCRA Vision Paper Steering Committee
RCRA Vision Workgroup

I received your letter dated October 2, 2002 in which you forwarded a copy of the final RCRA Vision Paper. I also reviewed your recommendation that I endorse the Vision Paper, help to make it available to the public and stakeholders, and help develop a forum in which the States, Tribes, and EPA can continue to collaborate to move forward with the ideas outlined in it.

The goal of the RCRA Vision Paper was to provoke discussion and facilitate a public dialogue to explore possible directions for the mid- to long-term future of the RCRA program. The paper also identifies three primary goals which I agree with and endorse: (1) reduce waste and increase the efficient and sustainable use of resources; (2) prevent exposures to humans and ecosystems from the use of hazardous chemicals; and (3) manage waste and clean up chemical releases in a safe, environmentally sound manner. I believe that these are the directions in which the RCRA program needs to move. While there certainly will be differences of opinion on how we should achieve these goals and how quickly we can get there, I think it important that we begin to move forward towards them now.

In fact, the goals (and the trends and future directions) that are described in the Vision Paper are consistent with my initiatives and priorities for the RCRA program. For example, the Vision Paper recognizes the distinction between wastes and materials are primarily regulatory in nature and that we should explore ways to remove barriers and increase recycling, while at the same time, ensuring protection of humans and the environment. In addition, the paper recognizes that the Agency needs to explore new approaches (for example, reliance on environmental management systems, use of industry-specific standard practices and methods) to achieve these goals. These and many other ideas are part of the Resource Conservation Challenge that I recently announced on September 9th; the Resource Conservation Challenge is designed to apply common sense approaches to waste reduction, recycling, and energy recovery. Furthermore, the Vision Paper recognizes not only the necessity of remediating past releases of hazardous chemicals, but also the importance of returning idled or underutilized properties back to productive use. These ideas are key to my Revitalization Agenda and

One-Cleanup Program Initiatives.

In your letter, you also request that the Agency develop a forum in which the EPA, the States and Tribal Governments can collaborate and move forward with the ideas in the paper. I agree that such a forum should be pursued. I think it would be a shame for the RCRA Vision Paper to be “placed on a shelf” as just another government report. I look forward to working with you and our colleagues in ECOS and ASTSWMO to identify (or create) the appropriate forum. I have also directed the Office of Solid Waste to include a session at the next RCRA National Meeting on the Vision Paper to review what has been accomplished since it’s release and possible future efforts that should be undertaken. I believe that such a review is important if we want to move the RCRA program forward in a positive way into the 21st Century.

Finally, I want to commend the RCRA Vision Paper Steering Committee and Workgroup for preparing a well written and thoughtful document, as well as pursuing public input on the content of this document. All too often, EPA and its sister agencies are narrowly focused on evaluating its programs and do not take a step back to creatively assess new challenges and opportunities as was done in this paper. I would like to congratulate and thank you for preparing an excellent piece of work. I know that many individuals contributed greatly to the preparation of this document. However, I would like to especially thank Mike Shapiro, Elizabeth Cotsworth, Mark Giesfeldt, Renee Cipriano, Ron Hammerschmidt, Dave Fagan, Angie Leith, Jennifer Kaduck, Peggy Harris, Wayne Naylor, John McCarroll, Karen Ueno, Jeff Scott, Sheila Sevenstar and their contractor support (Bill Ross, Elizabeth McManus, and Megan Duffy) for spending many hours in the preparation of this paper.

In closing, I wish to thank all who have been involved in this effort to prepare a visionary look at RCRA in the future. While we all recognize that there will be much debate and work to be done on how we get there, I believe that we must begin to take action now.

cc: R. Springer
M. Hale
M. Straus
C. Hoskinson